

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
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O R 281100Z JUN 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5535
INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 10583

FROM AMBASSADOR LODGE'S OFFICE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, VT, SA, SY, FR
SUBJECT: VATICAN VIEWS ON LEBANON

1. DURING CONVERSATION AT VATICAN JUNE 25, VATICAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER SILVESTRINI ASKED US TO CONVEY FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO THE DEPARTMENT.
2. THE VATICAN IS PREOCCUPIED WITH THE SITUATION OF STALEMATE IN LEBANON AND RECENTLY HAS MADE APPROACHES TO SAUDI ARABIA, SYRIA AND FRANCE TO STIMULATE SUPPORT FOR THE RESUMPTION OF POLITICAL DIALOGUE BETWEEN MOSLEMS AND CHRISTIANS IN LEBANON AND THE STEP UP OF RECONSTRUCTION UNDER THE AEGIS OF PRESIDENT SARKIS.

3. A DELAY ON THESE TWO FRONTS WOULD HAVE TWO UNFORTUNATE CONSEQUENCES ACCORDING TO THE VATICAN'S ANALYSIS OF THE SITUATION. FIRST, IT GIVES TIME TO THE PALESTINIANS

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TO REGROUP FOLLOWING THEIR DEFEAT BY THE CHRISTIANS AND THE SYRIANS. SECONDLY, A FAILURE TO STEP-UP RECONSTRUCTION OF THE ECONOMY OF THE COUNTRY WILL NOT ONLY DELAY THE RETURN OF MANY LEBANESE WHO DEPARTED DURING THE CIVIL WAR BUT MAY LEAD TO A FURTHER EXODUS OF CHRISTIANS.

4. THE CHOICE OF THE THREE COUNTRIES TO WHICH VATICAN

MADE APPROACHES WAS BASED ON CURRENT VATICAN PERCEPTIONS THAT THE SYRIANS ARE WILLING TO SUPPORT THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF LEBANON AND TO CONTROL THE PALESTINIAN PRESENCE THERE, THAT THE SAUDI ARABIANS CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE CONCEPT OF A PLURALISTIC LEBANESE STATE WHICH CAN PLAY ITS FORMER ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL ROLE IN THE REGION, AND THAT FRANCE, BECAUSE OF ITS TRADITIONAL ROLE, COULD STILL EXERT MODERATING INFLUENCE ON LEBANESE.

5. THE VATICAN HOPES THAT THE U.S. WILL CONTINUE SUPPORT FOR RESUMPTION OF LEBANESE POLITICAL DIALOGUE AND FOR INCREASED FLOW OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: WE WOULD APPRECIATE HAVING CURRENT U.S. ASSESSMENT OF CHANCES FOR RESUMPTION OF MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE AND ALSO CURRENT INFORMATION REGARDING THE SIZE OF PLEDGED INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF LEBANON. THE DEPARTMENT MAY ALSO WISH TO POINT OUT AREAS IN WHICH VATICAN INFLUENCE CAN BE MORE HELPFUL IN THE CURRENT LEBANESE SITUATION. SINCE WE HAVE FURTHER APPOINTMENT WITH SILVESTRINI JULY 2, WE WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT'S GUIDANCE BY JULY 1, IF POSSIBLE. GARDNER

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